

HSS Managers' Safety Meeting – March 9, 2009

Minutes

Safety Shares/Recent events:

1. Early February – smoke in GTN “C” wing corridor on first floor. An investigation by security determined that smoke entered the building air intakes from a smoldering mulch fire in a “no smoking” area right outside near an air intake. HSS staff members have been seen smoking in the same area where the mulch fire occurred. Issues: Discussions with protective members indicate they don't think they are "Smoking Police". Who then enforces the non-smoking area policy? New GSA smoking rules take effect in June 2009. How will the new GSA smoking policy be enforced? New rules clearly state smoking permitted only where designated; the lack of “no smoking” signage does not mean smoking is permitted.
2. February 26. HS-30 staff member falls in GTN room C-159. Person's foot was caught by the raised vinyl strip threshold between tile hallway and carpeted area of the conference room. He tripped and struck his knee as he fell and suffered a broken kneecap. He went to the health clinic and then took himself to the Shady Grove Emergency care unit in Germantown for radiologic studies. They confirmed a 'stellate' fracture of the right patella and referred him to an orthopedist.
3. February 26. Hole in the floor of an office. One employee using a temporary office space at GTN caught the heel of her shoe in a floor opening that was unseen and covered by carpeting. She was uninjured; however, the potential hazard is significant. Evaluation of the office showed that a floor mounted receptacle had been removed and no sealing plate or plug put into place to block the floor opening. Carpeting squares were subsequently placed on the office floor and no one was alerted to the floor opening. GTN facility maintenance was called and the floor repaired.
4. Late February. HS-20 relocated back to FORS office spaces only to find active construction generating dust in the vicinity. Some staff had respiratory reactions. Highlights the need to establish a better process to inspect an area before moves or provide notification if work is being done nearby.
5. Two HS employees have identified concerns with work-related ergonomics. Initial work place evaluations have been completed. Actions will be tracked to procure needed furniture and monitor conditions.
6. Last week. One new HSS employee at GTN experienced an allergic reaction to dust, mold and mildew in her assigned office. The employee had to be moved to another office to reduce the reaction and permit her to work. A request to thoroughly clean the office was submitted to MA's facility operations group and the MA Office of Safety was contacted and requested to conduct an air quality evaluation. The employee has been moved to another office space, cleaning of the previous office remains pending, and the Office of Safety has begun preliminary reviews to determine locations and sampling methods for the indoor air quality evaluation. NOTE: Special recognition to Ms. Sherry Main for her quick handling of the move of this employee to another office space.

Other Open HSS Safety Issues:

1. Vault status. Since the June 2008 review of safety and health conditions in a vault area of the Office of Document Reviews, HS-93, HSS has undertaken the improvements possible with existing budget/resources, however, major concerns regarding ventilation, adequate space, and electrical issues have not been surveyed or addressed by MA. Most importantly, a meeting with MA in August ended in an agreement to conduct a ventilation study of the vault. The study was completed in fall

2008, but HSS was not notified of the results until today. This issue requires HSS and MA managers getting together to determine the best way forward for all the open vault issues, not just ventilation.

2. HSS staff and managers have been identified for an employee-led task group in response to issues identified in the recent HSS safety perception survey as analyzed by the National Safety Council (NSC). Members of the "HSS Safety Improvement Task Group" include: Mark E. Petts, HS-23; Cecelia Kenney, HS-1; Mary Haughey, NTEU representative; Sherry L. Main, HS-1.23; Kenneth M. Stein, HS-93; and Candy Sanchez, HS-50. Please ensure these people have time to do this important work. First meeting is this week. Expect to get initial recommendations in 4 weeks.

3. HSS staff performing information classification and declassification work use classified work stations enclosed in lockable metal housings. This configuration does not permit the use of the normal CPU "on-off switch". The staff utilizes a "power strip" with an "on-off" switch to supply power to these units. The power strip switches are not rated for this type of duty. HSS needs to develop a suitable long-term solution or must obtain a variance from the requirements of OSHA standards to use these power strips in that fashion.

4. New report from staff member regarding pain in wrist and shoulder. Employee is requesting ergonomic evaluation of her workstation and proper adjustment of the furniture. Initial interview with employee revealed that she has been diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), or median neuropathy at both wrists. Additionally, she is under the care of a specialist at Johns Hopkins hospital. Evaluation is ongoing, however, staff member is requesting information regarding the work relatedness of this problem.

Closed Items:

1. Threshold between tile hallway and carpeted area of the conference room C-159 has been replaced with a new threshold. Follow-up inspection indicates that the threshold is in good condition and acceptable.

2. The floor opening in room C-151 has been repaired and closed with the addition of a brass sealing plug. The carpeting has been replaced. Follow-up inspection indicates that the repair work is substantial, of adequate strength and acceptable. All should still be aware that similar holes could exist in other offices.

New business:

1. Issues tracking & SharePoint status: HS-31 working to establish a working processes and communications protocol ASAP. Will adapt to SharePoint application as it becomes available.

2. Safety organizational structure. HS-30 will develop a proposed structure that includes the roles of HSS management, MA, the VPP committee, a FEOSH committee, the FEOSH program. Expect a discussion at the next manager's safety meeting (TBD).

3. Establishing better communications for events that occur in the HQ area. Staff should be aware of security, MA safety and building maintenance events and activities. FEOSH program will engage MA to establish an event summary feedback program.

4. From the main HSS web page it requires 5 clicks to reach the main FEOSH web page. Some staff members have expressed concern that they cannot find the links and available references on the FEOSH page such as how to report a safety concern/injury. FEOSH program will develop a new web proposal to provide easy access to FEOSH information.

Action Items:

1. Develop and publish a 'lessons learned' and/or hazard alert regarding vinyl strip thresholds used throughout GTN (and FORS?). Suggest use of event as safety share or informative tool.
2. Develop and publish a 'lessons learned' and/or hazard alert regarding floor openings covered with carpeting within offices. Suggest use of event as safety share or informative tool.
3. Contact union leadership in both Forrestal and Germantown to ensure they are knowledgeable of and supportive of HSS FEOSH initiatives. Establish a process to ensure the union is informed of HSS FEOSH activities.

----- End HSS Manager's Safety Meeting -----